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# PH 501 Philosophy of Christian Religion

Kevin Paul Kinghorn

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## Syllabus

**Course:** PH501 X1 (SP 2009)  
**Title:** Philosophy of Christian Religion  
**Hours:** 3.00  
**Published:** Yes, on 10/15/2008  
**Prerequisites:**

*None*

**Department:** Philosophy  
**Faculty:** Dr. Kevin Kinghorn



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SPO:

### **Meetings:**

During 02/09/2009 to 05/22/2009 Online via ExL.

### **Maximum Registration:** 22

**Catalog Description:** Pursues these objectives: a survey of philosophical method, a study of the mutual impact of the Christian faith and philosophical discourse upon each other, a reflection upon the overlap between Christian and philosophical ethics, and a critical assessment of the relationship between the Christian understanding of reality and other ways of perceiving it.

## **Objectives:**

- (1) We will learn to distinguish different types of arguments and to discern good arguments from poor arguments.
- (2) We will learn to identify the different accounts of human freedom found within the Christian tradition.
- (3) We will gain a better understanding of who God is by examining his attributes.
- (4) We will become familiar with the traditional arguments for God's existence and learn to state these arguments in succinct form.
- (5) We will develop our own perspective on the relationship between reason and Christian faith.
- (6) We will examine why people form religious beliefs and under what circumstances people are justified in holding religious beliefs.
- (7) We will look at the various religious experiences people testify to having and whether religious experiences should be considered reliable.
- (8) We will develop a better understanding of what a miracle is and why some people reject the idea that miracles might occur.
- (9) Utilizing the various approaches within the Christian tradition, we will develop our own response to the question: Why does God allow suffering and evil in this world?
- (10) We will develop a better appreciation for the ways in which religious investigation is related to scientific investigation.
- (11) We will gain a better understanding of how our finite human language can be used to describe an infinite God.
- (12) We will examine the relationship between the human mind and the human body, and how this issue impacts discussions on personal identity and the nature of our resurrected 'self'.
- (13) We will develop a Christian perspective on the phenomenon of religious diversity and on the fate of those who never

hear the gospel message.

(14) We will get a taste for how philosophical analysis can help us better understand such Christian doctrines as the Incarnation and the Atonement.

## Required Texts:

- (1) Hasker, William. *Metaphysics*. (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1983).
- (2) Peterson, Michael, ed. *Reason and Religious Belief*. 4th edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- (3) Peterson, Michael, ed. *Philosophy of Religion: Selected Readings*. 3rd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

## Course Requirements:

01 Module - Due Fri. February 27\*

LESSON 01 - What IS Philosophy of Religion?!

reading assignment: Hasker 13-28; Reason and Religious Belief, 5-14.

LESSON 02 - Freedom and Responsibility

reading assignment: Hasker 29-55; RRB 154-172; excerpt from H. Frankfurt article.

PAPER DUE

Topic: Identify and critique the account of freedom implicit in the Westminster Confession

02 Module - Due Mon. March 9\*

LESSON 03 - What are God's Attributes?

reading assignment: Selected Readings 133-137, 143-149, 155-167, 382-392, 402-416; RRB 58-76.

LESSON 04 - Traditional Arguments for God's Existence

reading assignment: SR 173-180, 194-209, 223-257; RRB 77-106.

03 Module - Due Mon. March 23\*

LESSON 05 - Faith and Reason

reading assignment: SR 89-95, 101-130; RRB 39-57.

PAPER DUE

Topic: TBA

(optional extra reading for paper: Richard Swinburne, *Faith and Reason* (Clarendon Press, 1981 edition or 2005 2nd edition), chpt. 4.

LESSON 06 - Justification for Religious Belief

reading assignment: SR 259-287; RRB 107-127.

04 Module - Due Fri. April 3\*

LESSON 07 - Religious Experience

reading assignment: SR 29-78; RRB 15-38.

LESSON 08 - Miracles

reading assignment: SR 471-496; RRB 173-193.

05 Module - Due Fri. April 17\*

LESSON 09 - The Problem of Evil

reading assignment: SR 289-314, 341-377; RRB 128-153.

PAPER DUE

Topic: TBA

LESSON 10 - Science and Religion

reading assignment: SR 547-580; RRB 246-266.

06 Module - Due Mon. April 27\*

**LESSON 11 - Religious Language**

reading assignment: SR 425-469; RRB 220-245.

**LESSON 12 - Mind-Body Issues**

reading assignment: Hasker 57-80; SR 497-539; RRB 194-219.

07 Module - Due Mon. May 1\*

**LESSON 13 - Religious Diversity**

reading assignment: SR 581-583, 588-618; RRB 267-288.

**PAPER DUE**

Topic: TBA

(optional extra reading for paper: John Sanders, No Other Name (Eerdmans, 1992.)

FINAL EXAM (in essay form) will be assigned Mon. May 18 and is due Wed. May 20, 11:59 p.m. ET

## Evaluation:

Each lesson will carry the assignment of posting answers to several questions, and then responding to at least 2 other classmates' posted answers.

In addition to giving answers/responses for each of the 13 lessons, you will be assigned four papers during the course of the semester. The length for each paper will be 4-5 pages, double spaced.

Finally, a final exam will be given during the final week of the semester. The structure of this exam will be short essays, where several questions will be asked, and 1-2 paragraph answers will be expected for each answer.

How grades will be assigned:

For each of the 13 lessons, students will be expected to give thoughtful answers to all assigned questions, as well as thoughtful responses to other classmates' answers to the assigned questions. While these answers and responses will not be officially given a letter grade, they will constitute class participation that is required of all students. Having satisfied class participation requirements, students will be graded on a series of 4-5 page papers assigned during the course of the semester, and on the final exam. Each of the 4 papers will comprise 20% of the course grade; and the final exam will also comprise 20% of the course grade.